

ARESTA NEWSLETTER

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ARESTA peer education programme informs refugees in Cape Town

ARESTA'S peer education programme has become an important education tool to refugees and asylum seekers particularly to those in the greater Cape Town.

The information, education & communication (IEC) program that we run at the Department of Home affairs (DHA) refugee section and Cape Town Refugee Centre (CTRC) is to some degree a mobile information centre that provides relevant information required by both asylum seekers and refugees. Information provided range from refugee rights, laws of the host country as well as international. The same program runs in schools in Cape Town and the emphasis is particularly in schools where there are larger numbers of foreign learners.

The approach in schools is somewhat unique as it focuses on issues such as xenophobia, tolerance, social integration, the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in host community as well as information about the geography of Africa.

In addition, ARESTA's peer education program assists refugees/ asylum seekers individually regarding their personal

issues such as medical, education, health. The staff works together as a team and this helped them to convey the same message field.

They have always had similar expectations, thus a strong bond does exist and therefore the smooth working environment has always been realized thus gaining trust and confidence from other stakeholders. Under these circumstances the probability is that the peer educators will refer to whatever is most convenient for them.

Numerous activities have been carried out since the beginning of the year as some may have reflected in our previous newsletters, but however, this has not been without challenges. Peer educators have at some occasions been over worked because of the overwhelming number of clients who flock at DHA every day.

Even if a lot needs to be done at Home affairs, we must appraise positively the setup at DHA. The setup inside and at the reception area are improving. Women children and elderly as well as people with disabilities are given first priority in service. All people are eager to listen and get information when ARESTA peer educators are giving

Information session. UNHCR volunteers and interpreters are also helping a lot enabling the staff to quickly produce required documents.

Despite the strengths, we picked up some shortcomings; there are still complaints of bribery and corruption among some refugees, security and staff members. Some refugees who don't want to follow the queues protocol and decide to take shortcuts. There was also concern of refugees, staff and security behavior which was at times arrogant towards one another.

Nonetheless, since May 2010 we have reached over 25000 thousand clients of which almost 90 % them at DHA alone and 10% at CTRC.

On behalf of ARESTA, as the year 2010 comes to an end, we would like to extent our sincere thanks to the Department of Home affairs, Cape Town Refugee Centre, funders and all other stakeholders whom we owe homage and the contribution made to our peer education program.

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Refugee service providers meet to consolidate the self-reliance national advocacy strategy

At the initiative of ARESTA, refugee service providers in South Africa met in Cape Town from 22 to 23 November 2010 to discuss in a seminar the consolidation of a self-reliance national advocacy strategy.

The seminar that took place in Cape Town at Kwantu Guest House in Minerlton, was organized by ARESTA in partnership with the Cape Town Refugee Centre (CTRC), the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and sought to produce a comprehensive and common advocacy tool for the coordination of self-reliance efforts across South Africa. Its aim was to explore and enhance the avenues which are available to increase self-reliance amongst refugees.

The seminar was attended by Staff of different refugee service providers in South Africa together with Staff of UNHCR.

Welcoming participants and opening the seminar, Mr. Patrick Kawuma, the Head of UNHCR's Office in Cape Town gave a perspective on self-reliance in the urban settings and pointed out that in most of African countries, governments don't allow refugees to work; refugees are confined in camps where their movements are restricted which is different to South Africa where refugees are allowed to work and this can be a positive point to start on when elaborating a self-reliance strategy.

Outlining the overview of the seminar, Charles Mutabazi, ARESTA Director said that the objectives of the seminar were to design the self-reliance

advocacy strategy supported by all partners supporting the refugee plight and to harmonize the understanding of the self-reliance concept amongst NGO's and UNHCR.

Charles went on saying that the seminar was also the first leg of a consultative process that will see NGO's and UNHCR harmonise their understanding of the self reliance concept.

Charles argued that the key to self reliance is work which generates income and resources which allow refugees to provide for their needs and ultimately become independent from the community and institutions. It is not merely material sufficiency but a cycle towards more development.

He emphasized that it could be possible once we have unpacked the concept, identified the various elements, their related problems/solutions /activities. From there, organizations will need to sort out the elements that have to be addressed by the government and those that will fall under refugee service provider's direct mandate. The element that needs to be addressed by the government will then inform the advocacy strategy.

Presentations focused on themes such as documentation, access to social services, access to loans and banking institutions, access to education, skills training and how they all relate to self-reliance and local integration.

Highlighting the UNHCR's self-reliance and reintegration

advocacy plan and strategic direction, Mrs. Kate Makanga, the UNHCR Senior Programme officer said that UNHCR self-reliance activities in South Africa include vocational skills training, start up kits, micro-grants, job searching/ placement, basic business management skills training, certification translation and SAQA accreditation, English language courses and day care services, advocacy for access to services and assistance with documentation.

Through different presentations it was found that challenges facing self-reliance include among others the dependency mindset of some refugees, improper and inappropriate documentation, access to microfinance institutions, xenophobia, language barriers and qualification recognition, evaluation and translation and access to professional bodies.

It was argued that although legislation is in place, failure to implement it is a problem due to corrupt or ignorant officials, lack of resources, people who are unaware of refugee rights and xenophobia.

The two largest topics identified were documentation and access to financial services and banking. It was agreed that there needs to be more liaison with the DHA, the government and the banks in regards to their working procedures, the type of documentation refugees receive.



Mrs. Kate Makanga, UNHCR Senior Programme officer presenting the UN Refugee Agency's Strategic Plan



Reporting back to the plenary

It was agreed that the South African Refugee Policies and the Bill of Rights are progressive but there is a major gap between policy and implementation in South Africa especially difficulties linked to access of proper documentation, poor knowledge and service delivery.

Refugee rights must be expanded significantly. The need for a close coordinated partnership between government policy and NGO/Stakeholder strategy must be developed in order to make a greater impact.

A holistic approach to successful local integration which sees local South Africans and refugees participating in community was identified as a key factor to greater local integration and self reliance.

It was the general agreement that a task force should be formed with the small group of ARESTA, CTRC and Manpower as the central delegation. Participants delegated these organizations to prepare the report and pass to everyone for input. Other stakeholders will give an input and give feedback on all decisions and documents and

In his closing remarks, Phaladi Kotsie of CTRC thanked every participant who attended the seminar and for all the great contribution made. He acknowledged the funders (UNHCR and CoRMSA) who sponsored the seminar.



Delegates listening carefully to the presentations. Here on the picture Mr Patrick Kawuma (UNHCR) and Christina Henda (CTRC)



Delegates working in different groups



ARESTA Learners graduated

On Friday, 26 November 2010, it was a proud day at ARESTA as learners of the second intake of 2010 gathered joyfully to receive their certificates.

17 graduated in English Language, Communication and numeracy and 12 in Computer literacy.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony Mr. John Stadler, the Centre manager of ARESTA Community Centre thanked all who contributed for the successful of the intake and reminded students that learning doesn't end with the certificates. He invited those who feel they need more to come next year for the next level.

John also commended all the teachers for the hard work during the hard time with the delay of the funding from Western Cape Education Department which saw teachers being without salary for several months. He informed them that waiting was over that ARESTA filled all the required procedures and that the payment will be made very soon. The ceremony ended with graduates sharing food and drink with teachers.

Registration for the new intake will start on 17 January 2010.

For more information please contact John Stadler at 0216338762 or email himcentremanager@aresta.org.za for more information.

On the same day at Job Start Training Centre, 26 clients from ARESTA graduated in various Vocational skills trainings.

On her keynote speech, Mrs. Neliswa of Job start congratulated ARESTA for creating a project that assists both refugees and locals. She said that assisting both groups will foster the local integration of refugees at the same time providing opportunities for both groups.

ARESTA clients graduated in various skills trainings like Chef assistant, food and drinks service, food preparation, housekeeping and commercial cleaning.

Graduates expressed their gratitude to ARESTA for supporting them in paying for the course, providing transport and paying for childcare for women who had little children during the period of the training. These increased the number of women who participate into ARESTA programmes. Before the introduction of childcare facilities and transport, women were reluctant to enroll themselves into programmes because they didn't have any other safe place to leave their children.

Marie Claire, a refugee from Rwanda said that the programme helped her family so much. She has been in South Africa for 3 years without a job. She couldn't even attend English classes because she had no one to look after her two children. She knew ARESTA when she went to extend her status at Home Affairs; while she waited for her papers to be proceeded she listened carefully to ARESTA peer educator who were

explaining to new comers where to go for different services. When she approached him she was given the address and told to come to our Office in Athlone.

After an intensive English language at ARESTA Community Centre Marie Claire were sent to Job Start to do the Food Service training for seven weeks. She did her in-service training at Capetonians Hotels in Cape Town. After that she came back to ARESTA for a Job Hunting workshop where she was helped her to prepare her CVs and emailed it to different potential employers. She got a job and now she earns R 3800,00 a month. Marie-Claire's husband who is a car guard at Claremont shopping mall is planning to start studying nursing next year at UWC because now his wife is working.

Commenting on the vocational programme, Joseph Eliabson, ARESTA's self-reliance and local integration Officer said he was proud of how the programme is growing tremendously. "it makes us happy to learn that most of trainees sent to Job start, 75% are working in hospitality industry. I am extremely optimist that next year will bring more excitement" Joseph said. Even if the year ending was successful Joseph said that taking into account applications received of clients who wanted to be trained in different vocational skills; the programme was only able to assist less 30% of the applications received, this is because of the limited funding received. We hope that next year the budget of the self-reliance will be increased thus we will be able to train more trainees.



Computer Graduates at ARESTA



Graduates at Job START

Anti-Xenophobia campaign reaches 10 000 young

The Anti-xenophobia campaign started from the Cultural diversity festival that was organized in June 2010 in Khayelitsha site C. Following this event ARESTA embarked on the education campaign with the purpose of preventing any possible xenophobic attacks as rumors were circulating all around during the world Cup time.

ARESTA in conjunction with Site C Action Committee Against Xenophobia (SACAX) decided to get involved with the schools where our facilitators will be engaging in open debate with learners about Xenophobia, Human Rights, Refugees Rights and Tolerance during Life Orientation periods.

Upon granted the go ahead by the Principal, we then speak to Grade 6 up to 12 under the guidance of the teacher and we convey to them a message of Ubuntu so that they can be ambassadors in their communities. Once we finish with the school we organize an outside event where children will be showcasing their talents via Arts & Culture: drama, music RNB/Hip Pop, Poems, Gospel, and Dance.

As we carry on with workshops of this campaign, we are noticing that the seriousness of the matter resides in a way that even children of Grade 4 convey messages of dislike towards foreigners; obviously they always get this information not only from their parents but as a result of peer pressure too:

they narrate incidents of Xenophobic attacks in a funny & pleasant way on how they forced into Somalia' shops and enjoyed the looted sweets, chocolates, airtime, biscuits, sugar, cool drinks, etc...

This brings us into such a situation that we imperatively feel the need to educate and help them change their minds for they are the future leaders of tomorrow, they need to grow with such a good understanding of facts surrounding them and develop a positive spirit towards social-political environment as whole; in so doing we prepare them to be our ambassadors in their respective communities.

During the workshops they raise so important ideas on how we can eliminate Xenophobia that you might think you are engaging with adults politicians: we all must sit around the table and talk about this problem; the Government must protect them nicely; they help our sisters to raise our children; the Government must create many jobs so that everyone can be accommodated when it comes to job related issue; we are all brothers and sisters we shouldn't kill each other; but some others do come up with opposite views: they must go back to their home countries to fight for their own countries like what we did to liberate ourselves or they must stay in the refugees Camps.

On 5th November 2010, the Anti Xenophobia Campaign Team organized an event that took place at IQHAYIYA Secondary School: with the help of Arts & Culture Teacher learners presented Gospel songs, Drama, Hip pop music, Poems, Traditional Dance, ... all aiming at the Anti Xenophobia, Human Rights and Tolerance theme;

In this stream of consciousness, we have an opportunity report that Matthew Goniwe and Masiyile High Schools have so much applauded our education campaign that they have decided to include anti-xenophobia materials into their examination program.

We have had workshops at various schools such as Intlanganiso, Community Leaders of Site C (3 workshops), Injongo, Soyisile, Matthew Goniwe, Bulumko, Masiyile, Chumisa, Iqhayiya, Sokumlandela and Ntwasahlobo and sport groups at VPUU in Site B and Makhaza.

During the workshop we always create a platform that allows the learner to speak out his mind in a form of a debate; consequently we get a huge opportunity to correct systematically some of his wrong ideas: for instance a learner might say "makwerekwere" during interaction, it is now our duties to correct immediately this by mentioning that each one has a right to a name; no one should be called with those derogatory names as if we were in the time of apartheid when white people used to call others the "kaffir". It gives us an opportunity to outline the South African' Constitution by reminding them that the human rights South Africans enjoy, the same rights apply to Refugees as well except the rights to vote and to be voted or form a political party. This Education Campaign was very welcomed at many schools where we got a thumb up and our program is being incorporated in final exams schedule, such is the case of Masiyile Secondary School.



Cultural events and sport helps the campaign to reach more people

So far we have had many events at schools where learners carrying message of Ubuntu do showcase of their talents in drama, poems, traditional dance, gospel songs, kwaito, Mapansula, RNB-music... through arts & culture; such was the case at Bulumko, , Matthew Goniwe. At Iqhayiya: in a celebrating mood, the teachers are against xenophobia as the picture show below, it was a great opportunity to distribute as many pamphlets as we could.

As the Campaign continues, we came up with the idea that we use the sport to enable us to reach out to more people of different race. At the ARK OF REFUGE in Khayelitsha we had a meeting with Sport Management of the Network we were given a opportunity to be part of the soccer Tournament Event on the 27th November 2010 at UWC (University of the Western Cape)' sports grounds; this has been agreed in the sport meeting we attended on the 9th November 10, 2010. The ARESTA team (Kids 14yrs or less) at the UWC playground where we are delivering the message of Tolerance, Anti Xenophobia, Discrimination, Human Rights and Racism.

At the opening ceremony, we sang the national anthem: God bless Africa... in a spirit of Ubuntu one people, one continent.

Congratulation to our Staff member

The staff of ARESTA would like to congratulate our Colleague Jean Luc Tshiamala on passing his Masters in Human Rights Law at UCT! Congratulation!!!

Jean Luc is the Senior Refugee Rights Peer Educator at ARESTA and has been with ARESTA since 2006. His master's research focused on Refugee Protection: The South African reality.

He made our organisation very proud. Well Done!

At the close of the event, teams were rewarded according to their performance. While speaking of sport as a platform to tackle these issues, we intend to approach SANTOS and AJAX Cape Town teams to come and play with Schools' Team or Refugees' Team in township. Players & fans will give hope back to their communities, the message of tolerance, of Anti Xenophobia and against Discrimination.

At the sport fields of UWC, our ARESTA team composed of children from Koeberg Primary School did play very well even if they did not win; they had enough time to socialize with others. The whole event culminated into a nice time when we took photos all teams together and delivered the message of tolerance & anti xenophobia.

ARESTA also had events at Khayelitsha Mall from the 1st to the 3rd Dec 2010, where we distributed many pamphlets +/- 1500 of tolerance and ubuntu.

At this event that started at about 11h00, the following dignitaries delivered their speeches against the Women and Children abuse: Lulu Xingwana;

the Women and Children' Minister; Angie Motsega the basic Education Minister and Jeff Radebe; the Justice & Constitutional Development' Minister. People crowded the Hall and we had enough opportunity to speak about the Anti Xenophobia Campaign to many people as we could;

We distributed leaflets caring the anti xenophobia message. It came to our attention that most citizens still need to be informed.

At Ntwasahlobo and Sokumlandela Schools, our program is welcome; hence we were given a platform to speak to learners as well. The challenge we still have is that of having a workshop with teachers before we do have with learners at every school we are about to have any workshop; they would help to keep up this initiative of mindset-change on the perception on foreigner, for the success will be easy if we all work hand in hand.

In our work we encounter many challenges that are principally related to finances especially when it comes to organize the events because of the need of catering for teachers. It would be also very supportive to get



Jean Luc Tshiamala, after the graduation at UCT on 21 December 2010

Stepping stones towards reconciliation in Africa

On the 15 of December 2010 ARESTA joined the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) to celebrate the reconciliation day held at the Delft Community Hall. The reconciliation day is normally celebrated on 16th December in South Africa but considering that many people start their leave on that day it was celebrated the day before which was the 15th of December 2010.

The two organizations celebrated the reconciliation day as an opportunity to raise awareness and engage the public particularly the youth on issues of reconciliation, transitional Justice and Xenophobia.

The event was also the culmination and celebration of IJR's 10 years of existence and took place in Delft which is a racially and culturally diverse community to foster dialogue and interaction among participants.

Upon arrival, all participants had to choose which workshop to participate in; workshops ranged from unity and reconciliation issues to discussions of African persistent glitches such as Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) crisis.

Reflecting on the decade of IJR's existence, Fanie du Toit, the IJR executive Director noted that IJR's activities have qualitatively increased and promised that the organisation will keep working widely to promote justice and reconciliation in Africa.

Besides the variety of the workshops that allowed participants to interact, the celebration was marked by songs, dance, paintings, poetry, and snapshots and games that evolved on reconciliation.

ARESTA learners and Staff who participated at the event were happy to be part of such an important occasion that supports one

of our goals of reconciling South Africans so that people could live in peace by putting aside their differences and building a new nation where refugees and asylum seekers could feel safe and be given an opportunity to be active in the host country.



ARESTA learners and Staff participated in different workshops



After the workshops and painting, refugees and locals enjoyed the music and dance of reconciliation altogether

ARESTA is kindly supported by the following sponsors:

- ✚ The Australian High Commission (Direct Aid Programme);
- ✚ Donaldson Trust;
- ✚ Hope for Change Initiatives;
- ✚ The French Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD);
- ✚ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR);
- ✚ Uthando South Africa;

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the above-mentioned sponsors for their financial and professional support for our programmes.

About ARESTA ...

The Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy (ARESTA) is a Cape Town based Non-Profit Organization

ARESTA's vision is that refugees are integrated into society and enjoy full democratic rights and benefits of South Africa.

ARESTA's mission is to contribute to the successful integration as a solution for asylum seekers and refugees through advocacy, training, skills development, education and research.

How can you help us?

Donations

You can make a donation using the form below.

Volunteering

If you would like to help by giving some of your time, please contact us! Volunteers are a valuable resource for innovation and research.



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ARESTA welcomes all donations in cash, cheque and kind. Your donation will help us to sustain our work and to broader our impact by training more refugees and offering them new income generating projects.

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